



Press Release

For Immediate Release

Contacts: Phil Chase
Sprague Energy Corp.
603-431-1000

Lieutenant Commander Mike Sams
United States Coast Guard
207-741-5420

James Martin
New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services
603-271-3710

Scott Cowger
Maine Department of Environmental Protection
207-462-7701

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New Hampshire – Maine Port Partners Conduct Area Exercise Incident Command System Sharpens River Clean-up Skills

PORTSMOUTH, NH. Sprague Energy Corp. conducted a National Preparedness for Response Exercise Program (PREP) drill on June 17 and 18, during which it practiced implementing its emergency plans for responding to a petroleum spill on the Piscataqua River. The PREP meets the requirements of the federal Oil Pollution Act of 1990 and focuses on the exercise and evaluation of government area contingency plans and industry spill response plans.

This week's PREP simulated an emergency response to a large asphalt spill on the river and involved more than 130 people from various state and federal government agencies and private entities. The exercise was conducted on the Piscataqua River with a clean-up crew responding to the simulated spill and at a command center located at the Portsmouth offices of the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services. The Unified Command was established, consisting of the United States Coast Guard, New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services, the Maine Department of Environmental Protection, and Sprague Energy Corp. Other organizations, including the Piscataqua River Cooperative (PRC), National Response Corporation, Public Service of New Hampshire, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the University of New Hampshire (UNH), and Tri-State Bird Rescue and Research Inc., also played important roles in the exercise.

Sprague Energy Corp. was this year's exercise sponsor and is a voting member of the PRC along with Public Service of New Hampshire and Irving Oil Corporation. Sprague has two terminals located on the Piscataqua River and recognizes the importance of participating in an exercise that enables it to test its emergency response preparedness. Buck Elliot, Sprague's New Hampshire Terminal Manager, thanked the agencies and organizations that participated in the exercise and said the event "successfully exposed Sprague personnel to the stress and challenges that would be associated with a real spill while providing an opportunity to practice implementing and make improvements to its emergency response plan."

Captain James McPherson, Commander, Coast Guard Sector Northern New England, who served as the Federal On-Scene Coordinator for the exercise, explained that "the exercise was executed using a Unified Command approach under the Incident Command System structure, which allows for an effective, coordinated response by multiple governmental agencies and private entities. The results of the exercise will enable the participating agencies and entities to be better prepared to respond in the future to actual events. Cooperation and coordination were the real lessons of this drill."

Rick Berry of the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services said "We were pleased to participate in this exercise and provide our regional offices in Portsmouth to be used for the command center. Our participation in the Unified Command structure allowed us to hone our skills as a team in order to more effectively respond to an actual event."

Jon Woodard of the Maine Department of Environmental Protection said "It was important for us to participate in this event since an actual spill in Portsmouth harbor could impact the Maine shoreline. During the exercise, we developed important protocols with our New Hampshire colleagues and are now better prepared for responding to a real spill."

The exercise also provided an opportunity to introduce new resources to spill responders, which may improve response capabilities. The Coastal Response Research Center, a

partnership between UNH and NOAA's Office of Response and Restoration, demonstrated its web-based GIS platform prototype, which was developed specifically for environmental response activities and is able to collect, manipulate, analyze and display spatially-referenced data, such as environmental data, habitat classifications, and navigational charts. The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services' Oiled Wildlife Response Unit was also on site for participants to examine. The unit is a mobile trailer, which may be transported to a spill location and contains supplies for assisting oiled wildlife. New Hampshire is one of only five states with an Oiled Wildlife Response Unit.

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